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Abstract

Undertaking a PhD is commonly viewed as an apprenticeship, where the student learns the trade of becoming an academic. However, the doctoral degree did not start off with that intention, and it may not continue this way into the future. The initial design of the PhD was a professional degree which gave students the licence to teach. Research was not a focus of the degree until the 1800s. Recently, the purpose of the doctorate has been under examination. This re-examination has come about for a number of reasons: (1) Employment options within academe are no longer as abundant or secure as they once were; (2) Employers have become more discerning; they are looking for specific skills and qualifications which are absent from the traditional PhD; (3) Government and society are demanding a research degree that is more relevant to the needs of business and the growth of the economy; and (4) universities are seeing the economic value of increasing student numbers, and creating better alignments with industry. This paper will examine the contemporary trends in professional doctorates. The findings will provide a clear and uncluttered understanding of the evolution of the professional doctorate and its impact on academia and business.

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Contemporary Trends in Professional Doctorates

Abstract

Embarking upon the journey of a PhD is commonly viewed as an apprenticeship, where the doctoral student learns the trade of becoming an academic – a teacher and a researcher (Park 2005). However, the doctoral degree did not start off with that intention, and it may not continue this way into the future. The initial design of the PhD was as a professional degree which gave students the license to teach within their profession. Research was not a major focus of the degree until the 1800s when the University of Berlin remodelled the degree and placed an emphasis on research. This new approach started to influence scholars in the United States and across the world to earn a PhD, and in the 1870's the PhD became the gold standard for aspiring academics in the US. It spread to Britain in the early 1900's – originating in Oxford – and then to the rest of the English-speaking world shortly after (Park 2005).

More recently, the purpose of the doctorate has been under examination, especially by employers and students. This re-examination has come about for a number of reasons: 1) Employment options within academe are no longer as abundant or secure as they once were; 2) Employers have become more discerning; they are looking for specific skills and qualifications which are not included in the traditional PhD; 3) Government and society are demanding a research degree that is more relevant to the needs of business and the growth of the economy; and 4) universities are seeing the economic value of increasing student numbers, and creating better alignments with industry.

This paper will examine the contemporary trends in professional doctorates. The findings will provide a clear and uncluttered understanding of the evolution of the professional doctorate and its impact on academia and business.

Introduction

The use of the term ‘Doctor’ is claimed to have first occurred to designate the position of ‘Doctor in Theology’ in 1151. However, the first written use of the term ‘Doctor’ in the context of education, came from a letter written by Pope Innocent III in 1207, where he discusses the plight of Stephen Langton, who was the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, and where the Pope mentions Langton’s recent award of Doctor of Philosophy and Theology (Malden 1835).

Since these early beginnings, the Doctor of Philosophy (or PhD from the Latin: *Philosophiae Doctor*) has changed from being a professional doctorate and serving to benefit the individual’s profession, to being a doctorate which establishes a student as a teaching professional with academia. This early version of the doctorate has evolved, and in recent history, it has divided its focus along two paths. Along one path, the more contemporary form endures, and the PhD continues to serve as the foundation degree for entry into university as an academic, and certainly as a mandatory path towards tenure at most universities. However, a second, more recent adaptation of the PhD, known as the professional doctorate, has risen from the ashes of history to find a very comfortable and viable place in modern society. This paper discusses the professional doctorate, comparing it to the traditional PhD, and then concludes with a discussion on its utility given the present-day public demands of education. The paper will conclude with an exposition of the four reasons why we may see the decline of interest and investment in the PhD as we know it.

The history and evolution of the doctoral degree

The first form of doctorate was based on the needs of a profession and was conceived to fulfil the requirements of that fraternity: ‘[It was the] qualification which permitted a scholar to

become a full participating member of a guild' (Buchanan and Hérubel 1995, p2). The focus of the degree was on its contribution to occupation and society, not on research as we find is the case with many terminal degrees today.

This early form of the professional doctorate emerged in medieval Europe during the middle of the twelfth century where it was awarded as an acknowledgement of one's ability to teach, not their ability to research. It was the endorsement a scholar needed to qualify for enter into the guild of teachers. It was, therefore, considered a degree with an explicit professional orientation (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). The foundations of the degree were based in Italy and France at the then leading universities of Bologna and Paris (Harris, Troutt, and Andrews 1980). However, the true origins of the degree can be traced back through religion where the title 'Doctor' indicated that the scholar was a learned interpreter and teacher of the Bible. The term doctorate in Latin (*licentia docendi*) means 'license to teach' (Miller 2012).

From its origins in Western Europe, it slowly spread to other corners of Europe and eventually across the world. Some of the first countries in Europe to bestow the doctoral award were France, Italy, Germany and Great Britain initially only in theology, law and medicine (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012, Costley and Lester 2012).

It was about six hundred years later that the University of Berlin (acting on pressure from its academic staff) introduced a doctorate based on research only (Bourner, Bowden, and Laing 2001) where the degree was awarded in recognition of the student's competence and skills in research (Park 2005).

The history and evolution of the doctor of philosophy (PhD)

The PhD arose as the contemporary research degree in the early nineteenth century, and, as mentioned above, Berlin University takes the credit for introducing this recent form of the

Doctor of Philosophy (Bourner, Bowden, and Laing 2001). Because of its emphasis on research and research training, this German variant attracted scholars from across the globe, most significantly, students from the USA (Gregory 1995). The dual emphasis of (i) appealing to large cohorts of international students, and (ii) producing a research-focused qualification rather than a teaching award, led to the migration of this model of PhD training across the world (Bourner, Bowden, and Laing 2001). The movement began in the USA when the first doctorate conferred at Yale in 1861. It then migrated to Canada, with Toronto in 1897. There was a great deal of resistance by British Vice Chancellors, which delayed the PhD's arrival in the UK until 1914 when Oxford University awarded its first DPhil in 1917. It then crossed to the other side of the world to reach Australia with the University Melbourne conferring its first PhD in 1945 (Bourner, Bowden, and Laing 2001, Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012).

The purpose of the PhD (research doctorate) was to prepare students for an academic career (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015). The model of study can be polarised into two basic forms. The US model has students undertake advanced coursework in areas of content related to the selected field of study, followed by a short research component and dissertation which is guided by a course committee (Cowen 1997). The British (and Australian) model has its students engage in solitary research and writing for the production of a substantial monograph which is supported through the expert guidance of a principal academic supervisor who has experience in the field of study. This model is likened to an apprenticeship, where the student learns from the master, and then eventually surpasses the master in knowledge, albeit in a very narrow area of study, once the academic journey becomes complete. The primary emphasis of both models is on the development of disciplinary knowledge, which refines and focuses the art, rather than on the application of research and the transfer of knowledge to practitioners (Park 2007).

The completed PhD dissertation (thesis) permits the student to pass into the academy (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015) and is considered as the terminal degree in most countries and institutions. As such, the contemporary PhD has been described with terms like: ‘the zenith of learning’ (Lovat, Monfries, and Morrison 2004, p.176) and ‘the pinnacle of university scholarship’ (Gilbert 2004, p.299).

After 200 years, the format and function of the PhD has remained fundamentally the same. The lifecycle of an academic begins with training via the completion of a PhD, and is largely based on the incremental development of existing knowledge and theory. The graduated academic begins to publish, advancing knowledge through continued incremental growth. Then the maturing academic supervises additional PhD students who continue the lifecycle. The focus is mainly on theory development through research and publication to serve the needs of the institute that grants the fortunate academics tenure. Until recently, contributions to professional practice and the community have been largely incidental. The PhD is an academic degree designed for the benefit of the academic and the academy.

The PhD is still both the benchmark of scholarly success and the right of entry for academic service. The PhD has been criticised for its narrow and single-minded focus that does not meet the needs of the broader society (Green, Maxwell, and Shanahan 2001). There is little wonder, therefore, that the doctoral degree has evolved from its early twentieth-century form to cater for the needs of other, non-academic, members of society. There are now three distinct forms of the doctorate. 1) The first form is the neoteric PhD which is research-based and is the cornerstone of most doctorates. This form of PhD has remained relatively unchanged since its twentieth-century birth. Variations on this degree are 2) the professional doctorates and 3) the higher doctorates. The professional doctorates are also known as applied doctorates, practitioner doctorates, and clinical doctorates. These will be

discussed in more detail in the sections which follow. The higher doctorates are an academic accolade granted to scholars who have made a sustained and distinguished contribution to their academic field over a period of time. They are usually academics, but these awards have sometimes been given to non-academics (Park 2007). An example of this is the Doctor of Letters (D.Litt., Litt.D., D. Lit., or Lit. D). The higher doctorate is not the subject of this paper. It will, therefore, not be discussed further.

The rise of the modern professional doctorate

The professional doctorate made its appearance in the United States at around the same time as the PhD made its way into British universities, during the second decade of the twentieth century. Harvard was the first University to award a professional doctorate with the Doctor of Education (EdD) in 1921 (Bourner, Bowden, and Laing 2001). Professional doctorates found their way to the UK at the end of the 1980s, and degrees such as Doctor of Engineering (DEng), Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), and Doctor of Education (EdD) became popular during this time (Donn, Routh, and Lunt 2000). Commenting on the rapid rise of the professional doctorate in the UK in the 1990s, Bourner et al. note that: 'By the end of the decade, professional doctorates could be found in over three-quarters of the 'old' universities and a third of the 'new' universities and the rate of growth had not abated' (2001, p.65).

The first PhD alternative was created in Australia in 1984 with the Doctor of Creative Arts (DCA) by the University of Wollongong (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). Early support for the professional doctorate in Australia built on the changing needs of the economy and society, and the receding relevance of the PhD seeded a Government initiative to expand the range and locations for university offerings (Lee, Brennan, and Green 2009). By 1996, professional doctorates were available in a variety of areas including: architecture, business,

education, health sciences, humanities, law and psychology (Bourner, Bowden, and Laing 2001). These new offerings were expected to create a better match for the requirements of a developing professional environment.

The range of programs included in the family of professional doctorates include:

- Doctor of Education (EdD),
- Doctor of Psychology (PsyD),
- Doctor of Engineering (EngD),
- Doctor of Music Art (DMA),
- Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS),
- Doctor of Applied Social Research (DASR),
- Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD),
- Doctor of Public Health (DPH),
- Doctor of Nursing (DN/DNursing/DNursSci/DNurse/ NurseD).

However, this is just the beginning, Brown and Cooke (2010) (cited in: (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015, p. 262)) found that there were ‘no fewer than 308 differently named and abbreviated [professional] doctoral degrees’ existing in the UK at that time.

Professional doctorates are essentially ‘doctorates that focus on embedding research in a reflective manner into another professional practice’ (EUA 2007). Early manifestations of the professional doctorate, what are now known as first generation, are modelled on the research Master’s degree with an initial component based on coursework, and a final component based on research, culminating in the development of a thesis in the form of a monograph. However, the thesis component in the professional doctorate is much larger than that which is produced for the Master degree, but still less than that required by a PhD (Kehm

2007a). The whole package is heavily reliant on individualised supervision, and academically-valued deliverables, and as such serves to benefit the academy above others (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015). New generation models are starting to emerge, where the professional doctorate relies on partnerships and interdependencies with professional bodies and organisations, like schools, hospitals, etc. These new generation models incorporate a portfolio approach, more industry-relevant deliverables, and a greater emphasis on applied research (Maxwell 2003). The focus of this model of professional doctorate is to create new knowledge for the workplace (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015).

The following two sections of this paper will consider what elements constitute a professional doctorate, and how these differ from the traditional PhD.

Parameters of the professional doctorate

While the PhD is reasonably standard across institutions and international borders, even given the more significant differences between the US and the UK models, this level of standardisation does not exist with professional doctorates. There are a number of reasons for this. First, there is confusion between the professional doctorate (e.g. DBA, EngD, DPH) and the first professional degree – a degree which has the primary purpose of preparing a student to enter into, and work within, their chosen profession (e.g. Doctor of Medicine – MD, Doctor of Dentistry – DMD). It is argued that the latter should not be considered as a professional doctorate degree (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). Second, the popular conceptualisation of the professional doctorate assumes alignment to, and a focus within, a particular discipline (e.g. nursing, fine arts, psychology, etc.). However, some professional doctorates engage across disciplines (e.g. nursing education, art history), this, therefore, blurs the definition and expectations of a professional doctorate. Third, the proportion of coursework versus research that is involved in a professional doctorate can vary, as can the

classification of the professional doctorate as either a coursework degree or a research degree (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). For example, in Australia the DBA comprises one-third coursework and two-thirds research, yet, it is classified as a research degree. Other issues which reduce consistency are types of assessment and variations in realised learning outcomes (Lunt 2006).

Considering the diversity of professional doctorates and the range of learning models they employ, there are some observations to make which might classify commonalities. (i) Study Mode: the professional doctorate usually attracts part-time students who maintain a fulltime job during standard working hours (Kehm 2007a). (ii) Professional Experience: Students usually have a degree of relevant professional experience in the discipline they are studying. In fact, many universities insist on a number of years of work experience as a prerequisite for enrolment (Evans 2010). (iii) Maturity: students are likely to be career-positive and in the middle of their career, with a view to climbing the corporate ladder towards personal advancement and they are generally older and thus more mature (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015). (iv) Research plus Coursework: The professional doctorate comprises two distinct components; one is based on coursework, and the other is based on research. For example, The Bologna Process, which is a trans-European agreement adopted to create conformity in education, including doctoral education, specifies that ‘typically professional doctorates include postgraduate study equivalent to a minimum of three full-time calendar years with level 7 study representing no more than one-third of this’ (Butler 2010, p.3). This defining injection of coursework introduces “more generic skills and interdisciplinary approaches” (Kehm 2007a, p.146).

Scott, Brown, & Lunt (2004, p.23) have distilled a list of features which characterise the parameters that professional doctorates should meet:

1. They have at their core coursework which is taught to students.
2. They have at their core a thesis component which is shorter in length than that required for a PhD.
3. The research must make a contribution of some kind, and it must be original.
4. They utilise a set of employment-related learning outcomes.
5. They adopt cohort-based pedagogies.
6. There is a focus on the professional development of the individual.
7. There is a development of practice which benefits the related profession; this may also result in a professional accreditation.
8. The title of the thesis will usually reference the profession that it is studying.

This list provides the beginnings of a framework that universities could adopt to create more clarity and consistency in the general approach taken in professional doctorate structuring, management and assessment. By embracing a more consistent approach, both universities and students will benefit as the degree that is taught, and earned, will be more credible and transferable across countries, and even within countries.

Differences between the professional doctorate and the PhD

Notwithstanding the commonalities between professional doctorates, there are also clear differences between them and this has been expounded by several researchers. Key among these is the work of Bourner, Bowden, and Laing (2001). In their research on 70 universities in the UK, they compiled a list of 20 differences between professional doctorates and the PhD, based on what constituted practice in the majority of universities examined. Most of these differences are discussed below.

Career focus. The intended career outcomes of the two programmes are inherently different.

The professional doctorate is designed to meet the needs of practicing professionals to facilitate their career growth. ‘Whereas the ‘traditional’ Doctor of Philosophy degree is intended to develop *professional researchers*, the professional doctorate is designed to develop *researching professionals* [emphasis original]’ (Bourner, Bowden, and Laing 2001, p.71).

Domain of research topic. PhD students have as their charter an obligation to make a unique and significant contribution to knowledge. There is no requirement for them to make a contribution to practice. Students embarking upon a professional doctorate have as their focal outcome a contribution to professional practice.

Research Focus. PhD students generally arrive at their research topic by developing research questions as a result of a thorough and systematic literature review which exposes gaps in the literature. This then provides these students with an opportunity to make a contribution to knowledge. On the other hand, professional doctorate students are expected to develop a research approach based on perceived issues within their own working lives. The approach is seen as much more pragmatic and deterministic. As an extension of this, PhD students tend to start with what is known, and endeavour to make incremental contributions to the knowledge-base, this is the concept of ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’. Professional doctorate students start with what is not known, and endeavour to find practical and sometimes bespoke solutions to solve the problem and create knowledge and practical guidance.

Admission requirements. There are two differences between the PhD and the professional doctorates in terms of admission. First, the PhD usually requires high-quality entry qualifications, and this is usually a first degree with a first class honours and/or a second degree which has a research focus. Whereas the professional doctorate requires a first degree which is based in the area of professional practice, and sometimes a second degree in the

same area of practice. Second, a PhD is more like an apprenticeship where the researcher is a novice who learns and experiences as they proceed. The PhD student is not expected to have any experience within the field they are studying, in fact, in some situations, it may be a barrier. However, the professional doctorate requires professional experience as a pre-requisite, and students are expected to leverage this experience.

Mode of study. The professional doctorate is usually designed to cater for students who are employed in a profession, and their continued work within this profession is usually an expectation of the degree. As such, the professional doctorate adopts a part-time mode of study, usually with subjects that are block-delivered during weekends and after business hours. The PhD has a flexible mode of study and can more easily cater to both full-time and part-time students.

Socialisation. Students enrol into their professional doctorate along with other students and are placed into cohorts and teams. As such, socialisation and communities of practice are integral components of the learning journey and the doctoral experience. The journey a PhD student takes is much more solitary, and the absence of socialisation and the isolation that results is often a major cause of student attrition (Gardner 2010, Torres and Zahl 2011).

Breadth of focus. Here too there is a dichotomy in the approach of the two doctoral degrees. Students undertaking a professional doctorate are expected to read and study broadly, while PhD students are advised to narrow their literature searches to areas that have potential for progressing their research interests. As a result, graduates of the professional doctorate will gain a broad base of knowledge within their chosen field, and PhD graduates will have a great deal of expert knowledge on a very narrow and focused segment within their field.

The fall of the PhD

The merits of the PhD as the prime terminal degree is a topic of debate among many universities around the world at the moment (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012, Kehm 2007a, Miller 2012, Park 2007). Some scholars are exploring the adoption of more hybridised models that take on aspects of the professional doctorate and how this may serve the next generation of doctoral candidates. Already, we are seeing increases in the amount of coursework integrated into many PhDs. Universities are also receiving criticism from the public about the self-serving nature of the PhD and its lack of utility (Fink 2006, Kehm 2007a). In the face of this pressure, the professional doctorate is receiving greater support from all quarters: from students who are looking for more employment options, those which exist outside of academia; from employers who regard the professional doctoral student as having greater value as they are infused with a functional array of real world skills; from society who, through the influence of government, maintain that the professional doctorate and all that it entails provides a greater societal return on investment than the PhD; and from universities which are seeing greater economic returns through the enrolment of more fee-paying students, and which are capitalising on the benefits of stronger ties to commerce and industry as a result of the business networks that professional doctoral students bring. Barbara Kehm (2007a, p.149) states:

[D]octoral education and research training is no longer regarded exclusively as curiosity driven and as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. Instead the generation of new knowledge has become an important strategic resource and economic factor. It thus becomes a commodity and its shape acquires a more utilitarian approach. Policy makers have begun to scrutinize research training and universities have been requested to develop institutional strategies to improve it. In addition, it is deemed so important a resource that it is no longer left in the hands of professors and

departments but has become an object of policy making and has moved to the institutional and national, even supra-national level.

The following section will discuss the factors that are fuelling this debate, and those elements of academia and society which are driving this need for change.

Students – Increasing one's employment opportunities

As discussed above, the PhD is the entrance requirement for staff desiring a position in the academy and it is the basis for the preparation of the academic as a researcher – there is, however, severe criticism about the inadequacy of the PhD programme in preparing students for the teaching role that is also part of the academic position. A quote from Gaff & Pruitt-Logan (1998, 77) presents the issue:

Let's face it. We have never really prepared graduate students to become college professors. Traditional doctoral study is designed to give graduate students the capacity to conduct original research. This is a necessary but insufficient condition for faculty success. After all, most faculty members manage a wide range of roles. Most teach and advise undergraduates, and many also teach graduate students. Many graduate students, however, acquire no experience in the complex tasks of teaching.

Unfortunately, the rate of PhD graduates is now exceeding the number of tenured positions available (Kehm 2006). As a result, there is a growing awareness of the futility of the PhD to provide a valued career path outside of the university (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). The professional doctorate provides students with a form of career indemnity, where the establishment of a doctorate still provides an entrée into academia; in some universities, the professional doctorate is seen as *subpar*, while in others it is accepted as readily as a PhD

(Lunt 2006). However, it also enables the student to seek employment outside of the academy. As a result, students are flocking to the professional doctorate in higher numbers as it has the capacity to provide opportunities for employment in two desirable fields, into academia, and if that does not work, into business or industry, or vice versa. An additional bonus for completing a professional doctorate, as opposed to a PhD, is that graduates who enter industry also become excellent candidates for teaching back into academia on a part-time or casual basis, thereby having the opportunity for engaging in two parallel careers.

While the scenario painted above provides an appealing allure for students contemplating a professional doctorate, the additional complexities of completing a professional doctorate must be pointed out. While the potential rewards are higher, so too are the demands. The professional doctorate stretches the resources and capacity of a student far more than the traditional doctorate. In addition, the student must navigate a study landscape which is dappled with many more distractions, like professional employment, contrasting networks, and the challenges of time-management and work-life balances.

Employers – Meeting the needs of the employer

The knowledge that a candidate gains through the completion of a PhD is narrow and specialised and is seldom directly applicable to the requirements of the employer (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). The solitude that PhD students tend to experience reduces the development of professional skills like teamwork, collaboration, corporate communication, and the development of political dexterity (Borrell-Damian, Morais and Smith 2015, Nerad 2004). PhD students may also lack the critical professional networks that they need to enter professional life and to flourish within it. As such, its relevance to the needs of society is in question (Lee, Brennan, and Green 2009). The professional doctorate has been developed to

address these issues, as it links directly with the candidate's professional employment and future employability, and this is achieved independently from the academy (Kehm 2007a).

Competitive market forces are now compelling businesses to look for advantages and differentiation on every front. Critical among these is a more significant engagement with the knowledge economy (Kehm 2007b). Almost every industry today is seeking advantages through an increased focus on information, education and research (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). The shift in knowledge acquisition is also moving from what Gibbons et al. (1994) see as Mode 1 knowledge production to Mode 2. This is also mirrored in the comparison between the PhD, which is largely Mode 1 to the professional doctorate which is Mode 2. Gibbons et al. (1994, p.3) explain this contrast below:

In Mode 1 problems are set and solved in a context governed by the, mostly academic, interests of a specific community. By contrast, Mode 2 knowledge is carried out in a context of application. Mode 1 is disciplinary while Mode 2 is transdisciplinary. Mode 1 is characterised by homogeneity, Mode 2 by heterogeneity. Organisationally, Mode 1 is hierarchical and tends to preserve its form, while Mode 2 is more heterarchical and transient. Each employs a different type of quality control. In comparison with Mode 1, Mode 2 is more socially accountable and reflexive. It includes a wider, more temporary and heterogeneous set of practitioners, collaborating on a problem defined in a specific and localised context.

As a result, there is an increased demand by employers for knowledgeable and research capable staff, but the demand is for Mode 2 knowledge producers. These are professionals who can work beyond the constraints of an insular academic discipline to incorporate knowledge that is broad, divergent and multi-disciplinary (Scott, Brown, and Lunt 2004). The professional doctorate fits in well with this imperative by endowing students with a mix of both academic and professional knowledge and applying this in an industrial

context. This formula provides the labour market with job candidates who are better adapted to industry conditions, and with the skills they need to function quickly (Kehm 2007b).

Kehm states that in Europe and the USA ‘the emerging knowledge economy more and more often requires a workforce having research skills. In the UK and the USA this development has led to the construction of “professional doctorates” (e.g. in fields such as economics and business studies or in education) preparing the respective students not only with research skills but other generic skills and competences as well, like managing research groups and large projects, communication competences and the ability to work in teams’ (2007a, 147). In a program run by the European Universities Association (EUA) called DOC-CAREERS, Borrell-Damian (2009, p.7) found that workplaces benefited from additional, and often invisible, skills such as ‘adaptability, the capacity to deal with complex problems and to engage in multidisciplinary work and, often, the experience of working in international environments’.

Society and Government – Creating a return to community

In most national economies, and certainly in first-world economies, knowledge is the core stimulus for growth (Kehm 2007a). Competitive forces urge for increased innovation to build growth and create sustainable competitive advantage. In this environment, universities have an obligation to support their communities and to question the roles they play in stimulating economic growth by engaging in beneficial industry-focused research and developing education programmes that optimise the return to community (Chiteng Kot and Hende 2012). For this to pay dividends the education and research they produce must be professionally relevant and there must be an increased interaction with industry to foster work-based learning (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015). A lot of this can be improved with an increased focus on the delivery of professional doctorates.

Public policy is playing a pivotal role in many countries to shift the focus of universities from one of an historical self-serving and insular perspective to one which includes a broader responsibility for the benefit of all stakeholders in society (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015).

Universities – Alignment with industry and economic return

The introduction of professional doctorates in universities is beginning to shift the traditional focus of knowledge creation from the domain of the university to a greater acknowledgement that knowledge creation can come from a range of sources, central among these is the role of industry as a catalyst for knowledge generation. There is reciprocal acknowledgement on both sides of this equation – industry and university – that the growth of knowledge and innovation requires a better connection between the two. The professional doctorate serves as the vehicle supreme for creating connections for innovation and research to the mutual satisfaction of both parties, and doctoral students will be the key to unlocking future opportunities due to their industry-centric perspective and their abilities to bridge professional networks between the two worlds, creating commonalities in language, culture and understanding (Lee, Brennan, and Green 2009).

Cases abound where the fruits of investment into professional doctorates yield increased industry-university enterprise. Building on a successful case in Osnabrueck, Germany, where as many as 90% of doctoral candidates sought a career in industry instead of academia, Gill and Hoppe (2009) discuss the benefits of a professional doctorate to connect industry and academia for information flow and knowledge diffusion. They see that the development of professional doctoral programs could “serve as a major engine for transforming business research in the U.S. and elsewhere” (p. 54). du Plock and Barber (2015), illustrating cases from psychology, talk about the value of professional doctorates in

creating professional entrepreneurship, which provides a vehicle for the two worlds of university and business to unite.

There are also shifting arguments that the increase in professional doctoral student numbers has occurred as a result of an increased economic focus by universities, who see the profit motive induced by fee-paying students. However, this is also countered by other scholars who speculate that the increase in the number of students enrolled in professional doctorates is merely a product of the massification of doctoral education and the professional doctorate is a way for students to differentiate (Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015). This is also compounded, from a student perspective, where potential PhD students intimidated by the low completion rates of the PhD and are uninspired by the traditional approach of the narrow field of research and the resulting monograph (Evans 1997). In either case, the professional doctorate presents universities with an excellent opportunity to capitalise on favourable student enrolments, and create a better economic return.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that we are witnessing the rise of the modern doctorate (Miller, 2012; Wildy, Peden, and Chan 2015). It seems that the professional doctorate of today is considered as being far more relevant to contemporary society compared to the more traditional PhD. To understand why we are seeing the rise of one and the decline of the other, the differences and commonalities between the two doctorates need to be understood in terms of career focus, research domain and focus, admission requirements, mode of study, socialisation and breadth of focus.

The PhD tends to focus on employment in academic research at the completion of the degree. It has a narrow scope with a limited contribution to practice. PhD students tend to have a high-quality education pathway. However, the focus of the education is based on their

expertise with research and not necessarily on discipline knowledge. This leads to students who gain a lot of knowledge within a very small niche of expertise. The PhD embraces a flexible mode of study, but the work can be isolating with little socialisation between students.

On the other hand, students who undertake a professional doctorate follow an education pathway which is focussed within the discipline area, and without dependence on research skills or knowledge. The research focus of the professional doctoral student is wide, enabling the understanding of the broader issues impacting on a particular discipline. The professional doctorate utilises a part-time approach to learning, where the students form into cohorts and groups.

Professional doctorates encompass a wide array of variety stretching from Doctor of Music Art to Doctor of Psychology, from Doctor of Public Health to Doctor of Engineering. There is, therefore, a range of variables which determine how they are studied and who will attain the degree upon completion. However, there are also a consistent set of criteria upon which all (or most) professional degrees concur, and these include such elements as study mode, professional experience, maturity, and coursework. Most professional doctorates utilise a part-time mode for study; they attract students who are mature with a vast amount of professional experience. They also comprise around one-third coursework and two-thirds dissertation.

This paper argues that we are currently seeing a fall, or potential decline, of the traditional PhD. There are many forces at work today to preference the professional doctorate over the traditional PhD. These forces can be summarised into four fundamental types. The first emphasises the cost versus opportunity to students who embark on either degree. There is no doubt that the professional doctorate is better suited to industry, and as a result, students

find much greater employment opportunities within this sphere, particularly given the recent focus on in-house research.

Second, there is a drive within employers to seek research-capable staff to enhance the competitive position of the company. When looking for staff, PhD students are seen as A) being too narrowly focused in one discipline area to be of great value, B) lacking relevant commercial skills to be of expedient value. However, professional doctoral students are well-equipped for life within the industry environment, and these students are seen as presenting optimum value for an employer. C) There is also greater pressure placed on universities from government and society to produce more relevant outputs, including educational courses and research. The PhD, in particular, is seen as lacking comparative relevance in today's market and is described as being insular and enabling universities to serve their own agenda. However, the professional doctorate overcomes these issues by being very relevant to market needs and remaining so. D) Finally, universities themselves are driving the emphasis towards professional doctorates, and this is occurring for two reasons. First, universities can make money by encouraging professional doctorate enrolments. Second, professional doctoral students create strong industry linkages which can be leveraged for research and funding opportunities.

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